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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5747
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1331
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0180
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4472
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1917
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3752
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7278
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 0603
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4842
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1052
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1051
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0862
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3055
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0706
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000183

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA, TREASURY FOR OASIA:AJEWELL

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA EDGES CLOSER TO ILO AGREEMENT

REF: RANGOON 0068

Classified By: Econoff TLManlowe for Reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The ILO and the GOB have reached an ad referendum agreement on the establishment of a mechanism to address forced labor complaints. The ILO Governing Board and the Burmese Cabinet must approve the text before the agreement is signed, probably in Geneva. The ILO Liaison Officer expressed cautious hope that the GOB would give the green light before the ILO Governing Board takes up the issue of Burma in its next meeting in late March. End summary.

¶2. (C) On February 21, ILO Liaison Officer Richard Horsey told econoff that over the last few months, with some interruptions (reftel), Burma's ambassador in Geneva negotiated with the ILO on the text of an agreement to establish a mechanism to address forced labor complaints in Burma. After the GOB agreed to a moratorium on the persecution of forced labor complainants, and dropped charges against those who had made complaints in 2006, the mechanism became the primary focus of ILO efforts. The two sides have completed an ad referendum agreement, which requires the approval of the ILO Governing Board and the GOB Cabinet. Since the text is essentially identical to what the ILO Governing Board accepted last November, Horsey said he expected quick approval by ILO members.

¶3. (C) Horsey noted that throughout the process, Burma's Ambassador in Geneva coordinated by phone with officials in Rangoon and Nay Pyi Taw. Horsey said he felt confident the senior regime leadership had been kept apprised of developments and had approved the final text. Although he hopes to have agreement "in the short term," Horsey said, no one could ever predict what the regime will do. Cabinet meetings are held weekly, and the March ILO meeting gives the GOB impetus for a quick response, Horsey added. Once both sides have given approval, he expects that the Ambassador in Geneva would sign the agreement with the ILO's Deputy

Director.

14. (C) Comment: The odds are good that the GOB will finally agree on a mechanism with the ILO to avoid becoming the target of further international criticism at this time. The Chinese reportedly have urged progress and without progress, the March ILO Governing Board could vote to refer Burma to the International Court of Justice. The GOB does not consider itself a labor oppressor and has difficulty accepting that others condemn what it sees acceptable for its stage of development and in lieu of taxes. This agreement does not necessarily signal any new acceptance of international norms by the GOB, but rather GOB desire to avoid the ICJ and further international condemnation. We will continue to monitor closely to see if the mechanism enables the ILO representative to investigate effectively forced labor complains, which would require additional staff and the ability to travel around the country without restrictions or interference. End comment.

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